

COMMISSION ON
SECURITY AND COOPERATION
IN EUROPE

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November 5, 2003

The Honorable Colin Powell
Secretary of State
Department of State
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We are writing to urge your personal participation in the OSCE Maastricht Ministerial in early December and to raise issues of particular concern as well as specific initiatives we believe should be endorsed by you and your colleagues. The Ministerial provides the United States a timely opportunity to elevate attention to disturbing developments in Turkmenistan, Chechnya, Belarus, and severe limitations placed on minority religious communities. The United States' leadership is essential to secure consensus on initiatives on combating anti-Semitism and racism; human trafficking; internally displaced persons; corruption and international crime; cooperation with the ICTY; withdrawal of foreign forces from Moldova; and the Annual Security Review Conference.

We urge you to forthrightly address the egregious human rights violations taking place in Turkmenistan whether or not the Ministerial formally does. OSCE States found the situation dire enough to invoke the Moscow Mechanism for the first time in 10 years in response to the crackdown launched by President Niyazov after November 25, 2002. Having invoked this mechanism, it is incumbent upon the participating States, including the United States, to place pressure on the regime to end its campaign of repression, address longstanding rights violations and act on the constructive recommendations made by the OSCE Rapporteur.

Similarly, we ask that you raise the ongoing human rights abuses in Chechnya, where the most egregious violations of international humanitarian law in the OSCE region are occurring. A year after Moscow forced the closure of the OSCE Assistance Group, the situation in the North Caucasus remains grim as those internally displaced by the war come under increasing pressure to return to Chechnya.

Meanwhile, the Lukashenka regime continues to tighten the noose even further around those who voice opposition views through independent political parties, media outlets, trade unions, and other non-governmental organizations, including those aimed at promoting Belarusian culture and language. We urge you to draw attention to these concerns as well as the intensified repression of selected religious communities in Belarus following adoption late last year of a highly restrictive law on religion.

The Honorable Colin Powell

November 5, 2003

Page Two

Though freedom of religion or belief is one of the bedrock OSCE principles, a growing number of participating States have adopted and are implementing registration schemes with onerous requirements aimed at minority or so-called "non-traditional" religions. While the OSCE has begun to examine this troubling trend, sustained attention will be required to ensure that individual believers and communities of believers are free to profess and practice their religion or belief free of burdensome and discriminatory government registration requirements.

Mr. Secretary, the Maastricht Ministerial should address the issues of anti-Semitism and discrimination, building on the momentum generated by this year's conferences on the distinct issues. The ministerial declaration should endorse the German offer to host a 2004 Berlin follow-up OSCE conference on anti-Semitism, as well as a follow-up conference on anti-discrimination and xenophobia to be held elsewhere. Given the pervasiveness of anti-Semitism, participating States should ensure accurate documentation about the Holocaust and encourage education programs designed to counter anti-Semitic stereotypes. Additionally, OSCE countries could be encouraged to provide the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights with existing legislation, statistics, and other information aimed at fighting against these pernicious forms of intolerance.

We strongly support the creation of a new OSCE mechanism to combat trafficking in human beings, as well as the endorsement by the Ministerial of the OSCE Action Plan. These new tools will make the OSCE an even more effective forum to address this modern form of slavery; the OSCE's multi-dimensional approach as well as its broad geographic reach will allow it to forge stronger alliances between source, transit, and destination countries as well as to address both law enforcement and victim protection issues. The United States should make full use of the OSCE as we seek to combat trafficking in humans.

The Ministerial should also address the rights of internally displaced persons (IDPs) by endorsing the UN Guiding Principles as a basis for participating States and the OSCE to step up efforts in protecting these vulnerable populations. While IDPs outnumber refugees worldwide, there currently are few international norms providing a framework for coordination to address their needs. In addition, greater emphasis should be given to resolving outstanding missing persons cases in the former Yugoslavia, as well as ensuring that IDPs and refugees from the region wishing to return can do so in a secure and tolerant environment.

The multi-dimensional issue of corruption and international crime deserve attention in Maastricht, given the relevance of these issues throughout the OSCE region and the fact that international crime remains a major source of terrorist funding. Accordingly, we urge that the United States propose the convening of a special OSCE ministerial meeting of ministers with appropriate portfolios in 2004 devoted to enhancing practical cooperation among the participating States in combating the common threats posed by corruption and international crime.

The Honorable Colin Powell
November 5, 2003
Page Three

While acknowledging the progress that the OSCE has made in southeastern Europe, Ministers should stress the importance of apprehending and turning over to The Hague all persons indicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). Not only do Ratko Mladic, Radovan Karadzic and others need to be arrested and transferred to the ICTY, the criminal networks which maintain and protect them today need to be broken so that genuine reform can take place.

The Ministerial also should note the lack of progress on the withdrawal of foreign military forces from the territory of Moldova; despite the agreement of the 1999 OSCE Istanbul Summit, Russian military forces remain in that country. While we welcome the removal of Russia's CFE treaty-limited heavy weaponry in 2001, we are deeply disappointed that the prospect of complete troop removal by the end of this year appears to have been illusory.


Finally, we would note the convening of the OSCE's first Annual Security Review Conference (ASRC) earlier this year and recommend that the 2004 meeting include a review of how participating States put their OSCE commitments regarding non-proliferation and arms transfers into practice, abide by the Code of Conduct in their military activities and undertake serious efforts to combat terrorism. Additionally, we urge that the ASRC be opened to public observation and make greater use of public-member experts.

We appreciate your consideration of these issues, and we look forward to working with you and your colleagues at the Department to make greater use of the OSCE in advancing U.S. interests throughout the OSCE region.


Sincerely,



Ben Nighthorse Campbell, U.S.S.
Co-Chairman



Christopher H. Smith, M.C.
Chairman



Benjamin L. Cardin, M.C.
Ranking Member

CC: The Honorable A. Elizabeth Jones, Assistant Secretary of State for Europe
and Eurasian Affairs
The Honorable Stephan M. Minikes, U.S. Ambassador to the OSCE